

A RIVAL FOR SLOPER

By Mike J Burrows

Amongst some recent (1977) acquisitions was an example of a Braham circular, similar to that which caused displeasure to the British Postal Authorities. Two of the objections were that he used the Coat of Arms and a facsimile of a 1d lilac postage stamp. As Frank Braham was also the postmaster of the Tabernacle Street post office, his circulars and letter-heads appeared to give official status to his perforating business.

FRAUD & EMBEZZLEMENT PREVENTED.
Important Notice to Users of
POSTAL & TELEGRAPH STAMPS.

NO CHARGE
for DIE,
POST OFFICE,
TABERNACLE
STREET,
E.C.



INSURANCE
for 1d.
and ABSOLUTE
SECURITY
from THEFT of
POSTAGE
STAMPS

**THE
F. BRAHAM,**
POSTMASTER OF TABERNACLE ST. LONDON, E.C.

Is by his NEW SYSTEM AND IMPROVED MACHINERY enabled to Perforate the initials
of Firms and others on all kinds of

REVENUE AND POSTAGE STAMPS
Of every denomination for ONE PENNY per sheet, (average value £1) as issued
by Somerset House, assuring to all users of Stamps security from misappropriation
(POST OFFICE GUIDE, page 1)

Stamps so perforated are secured to the owners.
They cannot be purchased by Postmasters, or used for Savings Bank forms,
thereby rendering the system of perforation important to every Corporation, Company,
Merchant, or Trader, by its absolute security.

Attention is drawn to the fact that all Stamps are delivered in sheets as issued from
Somerset House, Perforated perfectly one way, not reversed or broken, and the initials
clear and distinct from the separating margins.


Orders must not be for less than 25 worth, which must be
accompanied with Draft, Cash, or Cheque.

For users of small quantities any single initial can be perforated on stamps of the
value of £1 while waiting at Office at same cost, 1d. per sheet.

Stamps perforated for firms receiving them as remittances.

BANKERS:—CITY BANK, OLD STREET, E.C.

STAMPS OVER-PRINTED FOR RECEIPTS.
ALL KINDS OF
RUBBER STAMPS.
PERFORATING AND DATING
PRESSES, &c.
F. BRAHAM, USING AN OFFICIAL MARK.



Post Office,
Tabernacle Street,
London, E.C.

IMPORTANT.

Sir:

Your attention is drawn to
the circular annexed whereby a great
diminution of cost in the Perforation
of Stamps with initials, so desirable
to their security, is accorded. The
small charge of 1d. per sheet (average
value 1£.) of any denomination covers
all expense. The accompanying
requisition (with example) will enable
you to specify denominations required.

No charge is made for Die.

References if desired.

I shall be glad to receive your
orders in addition to those of my
numerous clients.

Yours faithfully,
F. BRAHAM,
Postmaster.

In late 1886 a complaint from a firm of solicitors, Bower, Cotton & Bower, to the G.P.O. about the use of the heraldic device and the datestamp of the Tabernacle Street post office, was followed up. Frank Braham being finally brought to task with the threat of termination of his postmastership. Part of his punishment was to follow the official line and to destroy his circulars. This he agreed to do, but added that Sloper was using the Coat of Arms.

Unfortunately for the Perfin student, the circular illustrated - which is printed in pink on white unwatermarked paper, the illustrations on the left-hand side being in black - does not carry a date. So the only logical step was to study the type faces in the hope of a clue to follow up.

Here luck is on our side, as the text on the right-hand side is set in Circular Script, the fount size being in the now obsolete Great Primer. The first mention I can find of this type-face is in "Morton's Monthly Novelties" for September 1884, listed as no. 227a. The Coat of Arms is no. 1045 in the July 1882 issue.

So having exhausted all the obvious avenues of research, I think it is reasonable to assume that the circular was produced sometime between late 1884 and the end of 1886.

Examination of the left-hand side reveals some very important points:

❖ /. *"All stamps are delivered in sheets as issued by Somerset House, Perforated perfectly one way, not reversed or broken, and the initials clear and distinct from the separating margin. "*

This is a very interesting point, as all Victorian stamps being produced at that time, were being printed in sheets containing various combinations of make-up, giving gutter margins between the stamps. Even the 1d lilac sheets had a plain gutter in the centre of the two vertical panes of 120 images. (At a later date these gutters were filled with pillars). On top of this there were the well known wing margins. So for Braham to keep to his claim, a single-headed die would give him less problems than a multi-head die.

- ❖ 2. *"For users of small quantities any single initial can be perforated on stamps of the value of £1 while waiting at office at same cost, 1d per sheet."*

From this it is assumed that no especial single-lettered die was allocated to the while-u-wait customer. This may account for the same single-letter Perfin having more than one user.

- ❖ 3. *"Stamps perforated for firms receiving them as remittances. "*

This might explain how stamps not of the then current issues may be found Perfinned. It also lends itself to the possibility that Braham dies may exist on the line-engraved stamps.

It took until 1898 for the reproduction of British postage stamps to be allowed. For this, one has to thank the successful campaign that had been waged by Stanley Gibbons Ltd. In a letter from Inland Revenue, Somerset House, dated 5th January 1898, to Stanley Gibbons Ltd, regulation 1 stated - "illustrations must be in black alone." On 31st January in the Stanley Gibbons Monthly Journal, C.J.Phillips said "... we gather that it will be illegal to use illustrations of stamps on circulars or on headings of note paper ... except where consent is specially given by the Inland Revenue Authorities." This does make one wonder if the encounter with Frank Braham was still being felt within the corridors of power at the Inland Revenue.

** "Morton's Monthly Novelties" was published by Charles Morton, The City Type Foundry, 167 City Road, London E.C.